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**TITLE:**

**A SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR CLASSIFYING TANGIBLE ASSETS**

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1  
2 Patent application claims priority from a provisional application entitled "A SYSTEM AND  
3 METHOD FOR CLASSIFYING TANGIBLE ASSETS," Serial No. 60/261,385, having a filing date of  
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11  
12 **BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**  
13

14 The present invention relates generally to a classification system and more particularly to  
15 a classification code for classifying tangible art objects.

16 Classification systems such as the Dewey Decimal System and the Library of Congress  
17 classification system have been in existence for some time. To classify each item, each work is  
18 divided into separate categories and assigned an alpha-numeric identifier. This allows each work  
19 to be shelved in a predetermined location such that the status of each work may be readily  
20 determined.

21 Other products have classified an item so that it may be compared to similar items such  
22 that its value may be estimated. Products such as the Kelly Blue Book have been used to assess  
23 the value of mass produced items, such as automobiles, using input data such as model year,  
24 body condition, and mileage.

25 The prior art has attempted to apply the above methodologies to tangible assets such as  
26 art objects, but with little economic or statistical success. The materials, method of construction,  
authenticity, condition, and provenance seen in an original, one-of-a-kind art object cannot be  
valued with a reasonable degree of certainty with non-subjective factors alone. Art objects rely

1 to a greater extent upon subjective assessment by scholars, critics, connoisseurs, and curators  
2 such that a valuation of an art object must take into account not only current subjective data but  
3 also data that spans years into the past.

4 The classification code of the present invention allows for the classification of art objects  
5 in a manner that provides stability to the valuation process and to economic and statistical  
6 consistency. The present invention is designed to classify art objects using a comprehensive  
7 asset class structure premised on curatorial and operational requirements.

8 **SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION**

9 Accordingly, the present invention is a new and innovative manner of classifying tangible  
10 assets that can, in addition, provide access to a plurality of independently moving market  
11 trajectories within the art economy. The present invention provides a definitive reporting  
12 standard for measuring and tracking the marketplace performance of fine art, decorative art,  
13 antiquities, other discrete disciplines, and collectibles. This allows collectors, dealers,  
14 auctioneers, bankers, asset managers, and legal advisors to manage and track the value and cross-  
15 generational transfer of art objects.

16 The asset is classified using a unique classification code which divides tangible art  
17 objects such as fine art, decorative art, antiquities, other discrete disciplines, and collectibles into  
18 order, family, genus, species, and sub-species categories. This classification may then be cross-  
19 referenced with relevant auction house data, including art objects that were offered for sale but  
20 failed to find buyers, to help determine fair market value. Relevant data may be weighted for  
21 risk against pre-sale estimates and venue performance as well as discounted to diminish the past  
22 effects of extreme or irrational behavior on the part of buyers on the auction floor.

1        The classification code of the present invention allows tangible art objects to be classified  
2        into the above categories and assigned a series of identifiers such that the asset may be cross  
3        referenced with relevant data to track worldwide market performance of specific types of  
4        categorized assets. Historic market performance patterns may be graphed and cross-referenced  
5        to well known standards such as the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and the Standard & Poor's 500  
6        (S&P 500), among others, to ensure statistical reliability.

7        By providing a uniform and statistically sound method of classifying art objects, the  
8        present invention not only provides financial institutions with the consistent taxonomy they  
9        require for conducting rigorous risk analysis for lending purposes, it also provides a standard  
10      nomenclature for classifying art objects. Specifically, the present invention allows the value of  
11      an art object to be determined with greater accuracy such that lenders may set advance rates  
12      more precisely, thus decreasing risk to financial intermediaries.

#### **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS**

13      Fig. 1 illustrates an embodiment of the present invention utilizing a computer system.

14      Fig. 2 illustrates the classification code of the present invention.

15      Fig. 3 illustrates an embodiment of the present invention utilizing a computer readable medium.

16      Fig. 4 is a flowchart illustrating an embodiment of the tangible asset classification process of the  
17      present invention.

#### **DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT**

18      The present invention is herein described as a classification code (100) that can be used

19      to access and sort asset data, thus allowing a computer system to classify tangible assets, a  
20      computer readable medium comprising a plurality of instructions for classifying tangible assets,  
21      and as a method for classifying tangible assets, as shown in the Figures.

1        **Computer System**

2        Referring to Figs 1 and 2, the classification of tangible assets may be instituted by any  
3        suitable electronic device such as a computer system (10). In one embodiment, the computer  
4        system of the present invention has at least one database (12) for storing information for each  
5        given asset and for storing information concerning each category of assets. The term "database"  
6        is used throughout this document to describe anything used to collect and/or organize data. This  
7        includes, but is not limited to, a computer, card catalog, hard copy file, electronic file, email  
8        storage device, and/or electronic memory device. In one embodiment, the database (12) is an  
9        electronic device searchable by a processing unit (14) coupled to the database (12).

10       The processing unit (14) is capable of establishing each category of the classification  
11       system of the present invention. These categories include order (16), family (18), genus (20),  
12       species (22), and sub-species (24) groups. The present invention is especially useful for  
13       classifying art objects. The present invention allows the value of a given art object to be  
14       evaluated using stored information describing other assets of the same identifier code, as  
15       described below. The present invention establishes a consistent framework to allow data to be  
16       sorted and compiled so that lenders may assess the risk of an art object and set advance rates  
17       more precisely, thus decreasing risk and enhancing asset value.

18       Referring to Figs. 1 and 2, once the categories are established, the processing unit (14)  
19       identifies each category with an identifier. Specifically, a first identifier (26) is used for each  
20       order category (16), a second identifier (28) is used for each family category (18), a third  
21       identifier (30) is used for each genus category (20), a fourth identifier (32) is used for each  
22       species category (22), and a fifth category (34) is used for each sub-species category (24). These  
23       identifiers may be letters, numbers, or any other textual or graphical information. Once a given

1 asset is classified into each category, the first, second, third, fourth, and fifth identifiers (26, 28,  
2 30, 32 and 34, respectively) are combined to form an identifier code, as described below. This  
3 provides a common reference such that information gathered for assets having the same  
4 identifier code may be quickly and easily compared with the given asset.

5 Once the categories have been established and identifiers have been assigned, the  
6 processing unit (14) is capable of analyzing input data concerning a given asset so that it may  
7 determine which categories apply to the given asset. When this is determined, the given asset is  
8 designated as having a specific order, family, genus, species, and subspecies category (16, 18,  
9 20, 22 and 24, respectively). The applicable first, second, third, fourth, and fifth identifiers (26,  
10 28, 30, 32 and 34, respectively) are then assigned to the given asset.

11 This information may be sent to the database (12) for storage, and/or used to conduct  
12 comparisons between the given asset and other assets having the same identifier code. This is  
13 done using valuation information stored in the database (12) to determine the market risk of the  
14 given asset. Valuation information may be entered into the computer system (10) using an input  
15 device (not shown) such as a mouse or keyboard. Asset information may be transmitted through  
16 local or wide area networks or the internet so that it may be readily available anywhere.

17 **Computer Readable Medium**

18 Referring to Figs. 2 and 3, the present invention may also be described as a computer  
19 readable medium (150) that uses a plurality of instructions used to classify tangible assets. These  
20 instructions are read by an electronic device, such as a computer, such that they cause the  
21 computer to perform various classification steps.

1      **Order Categories**

2      First, the computer (10) is instructed to receive information concerning a given asset.

3      This information may then be stored in a database (12) that is coupled to the computer. The term  
4      “database” is used throughout this document to describe anything used to collect and/or organize  
5      data. This includes, but is not limited to, a computer, card catalog, hard copy file, electronic file,  
6      email storage device, and/or electronic memory devices. In one embodiment, the database (12) is  
7      an electronic device used in conjunction with a computer.

8      Second, the computer is instructed to establish one or more order categories (16) for use

9      in broadly classifying the given asset. Third, the computer (10) is instructed to identify each  
10     order category (16) with a first identifier (26). Fourth, the computer (10) is instructed to  
11     determine, based upon the stored information concerning the given asset, what order category  
12     (16) describes the given asset. In one embodiment, four order categories (16) are established by  
13     the computer (10) at the instruction of the computer readable medium (150). Once the applicable  
14     order category (16) is determined, the computer (10) is instructed to designate the given asset as  
15     being described by the applicable order category (16) and a first identifier (26) corresponding to  
16     the applicable order category is assigned to the given asset, as described below.

17     In one embodiment of the present invention, the order categories are Fine Art, Decorative

18     Art, Antiquities, Other Discrete Disciplines, and Collectibles. In this embodiment, “001” is used  
19     as the first identifier for the Fine Art order category, “002” is used as the first identifier for the  
20     Decorative Art category, “003” is used as the first identifier for the Antiquities category, “004” is  
21     used as the first identifier for the Other Discrete Disciplines category, and “005” is used as the  
22     first identifier for the Collectibles category.

1      **Family Categories**

2      The computer (10) may then be instructed to establish one or more family categories (18)  
3      for use in further classifying the given asset. Once Family categories have been established, the  
4      computer (10) is instructed to identify each family category (18) with a second identifier (28).  
5      The computer (10) is then instructed to determine, based upon the stored information concerning  
6      the given asset, what family category describes the given asset. Once the applicable family  
7      category (18) is determined, the computer (10) is instructed to designate the given asset as being  
8      described by the applicable family category and the second identifier (28) corresponding to the  
9      applicable family category is assigned to the given asset.

10     In one embodiment, the Fine Art order category includes four family categories each  
11     having a second identifier. In one embodiment, these categories include Paintings having a  
12     second identifier of “001”, Sculpture “002”, Works on Paper “003”, and Tapestries “004”. To  
13     illustrate, the identifier code of a given asset determined to have a Fine Art order category and a  
14     Tapestries family category would be designated by first and second identifiers of “001.004”.

15     In one embodiment, the Decorative Art order category includes five family categories  
16     each having a second identifier. These categories include Furniture “001”, Decorations “002”,  
17     Couture “003”, Ephemera “004”, and Textiles “005”. To illustrate, the identifier code of a given  
18     asset determined to have a Decorative Art order category and a Textiles family category would  
19     be designated by “002.005”.

20     In one embodiment, the Antiquities order category includes seven family categories each  
21     having a second identifier. These categories include Ancient Near East “001”, Egyptian “002”,  
22     Etruscan, Roman “003”, Early Church “004”, Greek & Hellenistic “005”, Pre-Columbian “006”,

1 and Pre-History "007". To illustrate, the identifier code of a given asset determined to have an  
2 Antiquities order category and an Egyptian family category would be designated by "003.002".

3 In one embodiment, the Other Discrete Disciplines order category includes nine family  
4 categories each having a second identifier. These categories include Arms & Armor "001",  
5 Asian Art "002", Books, Bindings, Manuscripts, Signatures, & Maps "003", Carpets "004",  
6 Clocks, Timepieces and Scientific Instruments "005", Contemporary Forms in Media & Action  
7 "006", Islamic Art "007", Judaica "008", and Tribal Art "009". To illustrate, the identifier code  
8 of a given asset determined to have an Other Discrete Disciplines order category and a Carpets  
9 family category would be designated by "004.004".

10 In one embodiment, the Collectibles order category includes eight family categories each  
11 having a second identifier. These categories include Animation & Comic Art "001", Coins  
12 "002", Geophysical & Mineral "003", Sports Memorabilia "004", Stamps"005", Toys "006", and  
13 Vintage Cars "007", and Wines "008". To illustrate, the identifier code of a given asset  
14 determined to have a Collectibles order category and a Wines family category would be  
15 designated by "005.008".

#### Genus Categories

16 The computer (10) may then be instructed to establish one or more genus categories (20)  
17 for use in further classifying the given asset. Once genus categories have been established, the  
18 computer (10) is instructed to identify each genus category (20) with a third identifier (30). The  
19 computer (10) is then instructed to determine, based upon the stored information concerning the  
20 given asset, what genus category (20) describes the given asset. Once the applicable genus  
21 category is determined, the computer (10) is instructed to designate the given asset as being

1 described by the applicable genus category (20) and the third identifier (30) corresponding to the  
2 applicable genus category is assigned to the given asset.

3 In one embodiment, the Paintings family category includes twelve genus categories each  
4 having a third identifier. These categories include American through 19<sup>th</sup> century “001”, English  
5 through 19<sup>th</sup> century “002”, French through 19<sup>th</sup> century “003”, Other Continental through 19<sup>th</sup>  
6 century “004”, Contemporary “005”, Modernist 20<sup>th</sup> Century Masterworks “006”, Illuminations  
7 & Incunabula “007”, Latin America “008”, Mannerist “009”, Medieval “010”, Old Master  
8 “011”, and Renaissance “012”. To illustrate, the identifier code of a given asset determined to  
9 have a Fine Art order category, a Paintings family category, and a Mannerist genus category  
10 would be designated by “001.001.009”.

11 In one embodiment, the Sculpture family category includes nine genus categories each  
12 having a third identifier. These categories include American through 19<sup>th</sup> century “001”, English  
13 through 19<sup>th</sup> century “002”, French through 19<sup>th</sup> century “003”, Other Continental through 19<sup>th</sup>  
14 century “004”, Contemporary “005”, Modernist 20<sup>th</sup> century Masterworks “006”, Late Roman,  
15 Gothic & Medieval “007”, Renaissance “008”, and Garden Sculpture “009”. To illustrate, the  
16 identifier code of a given asset determined to have a Fine Art order category, a Sculpture family  
17 category, and a Garden Sculpture genus category would be designated by “001.002.009”.

18 In one embodiment, the Works on Paper family category includes six genus categories  
19 each having a third identifier. These categories include Drawings “001”, Watercolors “002”,  
20 Photographs “003”, The Other Print Media “004”, Contemporary “005”, and Modernist 20<sup>th</sup>  
21 century Masterworks “006”. To illustrate, the identifier code of a given asset determined to have

1 a Fine Art order category, a Works on Paper family category, and a photographs genus category  
2 would be designated by first, second, and third identifiers of “001.003.003”.

3 In one embodiment, the Furniture family category within the Decorative Art order  
4 category includes five genus categories each having a third identifier. These categories include  
5 American through 19<sup>th</sup> century “001”, English through 19<sup>th</sup> century “002”, French through 19<sup>th</sup>  
6 century “003”, Other Continental through 19<sup>th</sup> century “004”, and Modernist 20<sup>th</sup> century  
7 Masterworks “005”. To illustrate, the identifier code of a given asset determined to have a  
8 Decorative art order category, a Furniture family category, and a Other Continental through 19<sup>th</sup>  
9 century genus category would be designated by “002.001.004”.

10 In one embodiment, the Decorations family category within the Decorative Art order  
11 category includes five genus categories each having a third identifier. These categories include  
12 American through 19<sup>th</sup> century “001”, English through 19<sup>th</sup> century “002”, French through 19<sup>th</sup>  
13 century “003”, Other Continental through 19<sup>th</sup> century “004”, and Modernist 20<sup>th</sup> century  
14 Masterworks “005”. To illustrate, the identifier code of a given asset determined to have a  
15 Decorative art order category, a Decorations family category, and a Other Continental through  
16 19<sup>th</sup> century genus category would be designated by “002.002.004”.

17 In one embodiment, the Couture family category within the Decorative Art order  
18 category includes three genus categories each having a third identifier. These categories include  
19 Costumes “001”, Accessories “002”, and Jewelry: Precious and Other “003”. To illustrate, the  
20 identifier code of a given asset determined to have a Decorative Art order category, a Couture  
21 family category, and a Costumes genus category would be designated by “002.003.001”.

1        In one embodiment, the Ancient Near East, Egyptian, Etruscan / Roman, Early Church or  
2        Greek & Hellenistic family categories within the Antiquities order category include three genus  
3        categories each having a third identifier. These categories include Fine Art “001”, Coinage  
4        “002”, and Articles of Daily Life “003”. To illustrate, the identifier code of a given asset  
5        determined to have an Antiquities order category, an Egyptian family category, and a Fine Art  
6        genus category would be designated by “003.002.001”.

7        In one embodiment, the Pre-Columbian family category within the Antiquities order  
8        category include two genus categories each having a third identifier. These categories include  
9        Fine Art “001” and Articles of Daily Life “002”. To illustrate, the identifier code of a given  
10      asset determined to have an Antiquities order category, a Pre-Columbian family category, and a  
11      Fine Art genus category would be designated by “003.006.001”.

12       In one embodiment, the Asian Art family category within the Other Discrete Disciplines  
13       order category includes five genus categories each having a third identifier. These categories  
14       include Chinese “001”, Japanese “002”, Korean “003”, Indian “004”, and Central & Southeast  
15       Asian “005”. To illustrate, the identifier code of a given asset determined to have a Decorative  
16       Art order category, a Couture family category, and a Costumes genus category would be  
17       designated by “002.003.001”.

18       In one embodiment, the Tribal Art family category within the Other Discrete Disciplines  
19       order category includes three genus categories each having a third identifier. These categories  
20       include American Indian Art “001”, African Art “002”, and Oceanic Art “003”. To illustrate, the  
21       identifier code of a given asset determined to have an Other Discrete Disciplines order category,

1 a Tribal Art family category, and an African Art genus category would be designated by  
2 “004.008.002”.

3 **Species Categories**  
4 The computer may then be instructed to establish one or more species categories (22) for  
5 use in further classifying the given asset. Once Species categories (22) have been established,  
6 the computer (10) is instructed to identify each Species category with a fourth identifier (32).  
7 The computer (10) is then instructed to determine, based upon the stored information concerning  
8 the given asset, what Species category (22) describes the given asset. Once the applicable  
9 Species category is determined, the computer (10) is instructed to designate the given asset as  
10 being described by the applicable Species category (22) and the fourth identifier (32)  
11 corresponding to the applicable Species category (22) is assigned to the given asset.

12 Referring further to Fig. 2, in one embodiment, the American through 19<sup>th</sup> century genus  
13 category having a Paintings family category includes three species categories each having a  
14 fourth identifier. These categories include American School “001”, Itinerant Painters “002”, and  
15 Impressionists “003”. To illustrate, the identifier code of a given asset determined to have a Fine  
16 Art order category, a Paintings family category, an American through 19<sup>th</sup> century genus  
17 category, and an American School species category would be designated by “001.001.001.001”.

18 In one embodiment, the English through 19<sup>th</sup> century genus category having a Paintings  
19 family category includes one species category having a fourth identifier. This category includes  
20 Victorian “001”. To illustrate, the identifier code of a given asset determined to have a Fine Art  
21 order category, a Paintings family category, an English through 19<sup>th</sup> century genus category, and  
22 a Victorian species category would be designated by “001.001.002.001”.

1           In one embodiment, the French through 19<sup>th</sup> century genus category having a Paintings  
2 family category includes two species categories each having a fourth identifier. These categories  
3 include Barbizon School “001” and Impressionists “002”. To illustrate, the identifier code of a  
4 given asset determined to have a Fine Art order category, a Paintings family category, a French  
5 through 19<sup>th</sup> century genus category, and an Impressionists species category would be designated  
6 by “001.001.003.002”.

7           In one embodiment, the Modernist 20<sup>th</sup> century Masterworks genus category having a  
8 Paintings family category includes one species category having a fourth identifier. This category  
9 includes American “001”. To illustrate, the identifier code of a given asset determined to have a  
10 Fine Art order category, a Paintings family category, a Modernist 20<sup>th</sup> century Masterworks  
11 genus category, and an American species category would be designated by “001.001.006.001”.

12           In one embodiment, the French through 19<sup>th</sup> century genus category having a Sculpture  
13 family category includes one species category having a fourth identifier. This category includes  
14 19<sup>th</sup> Century “001”. To illustrate, the identifier code of a given asset determined to have a Fine  
15 Art order category, a Sculpture family category, a French through 19<sup>th</sup> century genus category,  
16 and a 19<sup>th</sup> century species category would be designated by “001.002.003.001”.

17           In one embodiment, the Drawings genus category having a Works on Paper family  
18 category includes two species categories each having a fourth identifier. These categories  
19 include Old Master “001” and Other “002”. To illustrate, the identifier code of a given asset  
20 determined to have a Fine Art order category, a Works on Paper family category, Drawings  
21 genus category, and an Old Master species category would be designated by “001.003.001.001”.

1        In one embodiment, the American through 19<sup>th</sup> century, English through 19<sup>th</sup> century, and  
2        French through 19<sup>th</sup> century genus categories located within the Furniture family category each  
3        include one species category having a fourth identifier. This category includes Seat & Case  
4        “001”. To illustrate, the identifier code of a given asset determined to have a Decorative Art  
5        order category, a Furniture family category, an American through 19<sup>th</sup> century genus category,  
6        and a Seat & Case species category would be designated by “002.001.001.001”.

7        In one embodiment, the American through 19<sup>th</sup> century, English through 19<sup>th</sup> century,  
8        French through 19<sup>th</sup> century, and Other Continental through 19<sup>th</sup> century genus categories located  
9        within the Decorations family category each include five species categories each having a fourth  
10      identifier. These categories include Ceramic “001”, Metalwork: Precious & Other “002”,  
11      Stonework “003”, Glass “004” and Wood “005”. To illustrate, the identifier code of a given  
12      asset determined to have a Decorative Art order category, a Decorations family category, an  
13      American through 19<sup>th</sup> century genus category, and a Wood species category would be  
14      designated by “002.002.001.005”.

15      **Sub-Species Categories**

16      The computer (10) may then be instructed to establish one or more sub-species categories  
17      (24) for use in further classifying the given asset. Once sub-species categories (24) have been  
18      established, the computer (10) is instructed to identify each sub-species category with a fifth  
19      identifier (34). The computer (10) is then instructed to determine, based upon the stored  
20      information concerning the given asset, what sub-species category describes the given asset.  
21      Once the applicable sub-species category (24) is determined, the computer (10) is instructed to  
22      designate the given asset as being described by the applicable sub-species category (24) and the

1 fifth identifier (34) corresponding to the applicable sub-species category is assigned to the given  
2 asset.

3 Referring further to Fig 2, in one embodiment, the American School species category  
4 includes two sub-species categories each having a fifth identifier. These categories include 1850  
5 through 1900, designated by “001” and Hudson River School “002”. To illustrate, the identifier  
6 code of a given asset determined to have a Fine Art order category, a Paintings family category,  
7 an American through 19<sup>th</sup> century genus category, an American School species category and a  
8 Hudson River School sub-species category would be designated by “001.001.001.001.002”.

9 In one embodiment, the 19<sup>th</sup> Century species category includes two sub-species  
10 categories each having a fifth identifier. These categories include Metalwork “001” and  
11 Stonework “002”. To illustrate, the identifier code of a given asset determined to have a Fine  
12 Art order category, a Sculpture family category, an French through 19<sup>th</sup> century genus category,  
13 a 19<sup>th</sup> century species category and a Metalwork sub-species category would be designated by  
14 “001.002.003.001.001”.

15 In one embodiment, the Seat & Case species category located within either the American  
16 through 19<sup>th</sup> century, English through 19<sup>th</sup> century, or French through 19<sup>th</sup> century genus  
17 categories each include one sub-species category having a fifth identifier. This category includes  
18 1750 through 1800, designated by “001” and Hudson River School “002”. To illustrate, the  
19 identifier code of a given asset determined to have a Decorative Art order category, a Furniture  
20 family category, an American through 19<sup>th</sup> century genus category, a Seat & Case species  
21 category and a 1750 through 1800 sub-species category would be designated by  
22 “002.001.001.001.001”.

1        The identifier code assigned to a given asset may be compiled by a database for storage,  
2 and/or used to conduct comparisons between the given asset and other assets having the same  
3 identifier code. This is accomplished using valuation information that may be stored in the  
4 database. Valuation information pertaining to assets having the same identifier code as the given  
5 asset may be cross referenced and compared to determine potential variation of its fair market  
6 value. Asset information may be transmitted through local or wide area networks or the internet  
7 so that it may be readily available anywhere.

8        **Methods of Classifying Tangible Assets**

9        Referring to the flowchart of Fig. 4, the present invention may also be described as a  
10 method for classifying tangible assets. Fig. 4 illustrates an embodiment of the tangible asset  
11 classification process of the present invention.

12        The present invention allows a given asset to be classified by following a few simple  
13 steps. A database (12) may be used or accessed by the present invention to allow the storage of  
14 information used to classify each asset. The term "database" is used throughout this document to  
15 describe anything used to collect and/or organize data. This includes, but is not limited to, a  
16 computer, card catalog, hard copy file, electronic file, email storage device, and/or electronic  
17 memory devices.

18        **Order Categories**

19        First, one or more order categories (16) are established within the database. Second, each  
20 order category is identified with a first identifier (26). Third, it is determined which of the order  
21 categories (16) best describes the asset to be classified (the given asset). Fourth, the given asset  
22 is designated within the database as being described by an applicable order category (16). Fifth,

1 the first identifier (26) corresponding to the applicable order category (16) is assigned to the  
2 given asset, as described below.

3 Referring back to Fig. 2, in one embodiment of the present invention, the order categories  
4 are Fine Art, Decorative Art, Antiquities, Other Discrete Disciplines, and Collectibles. In this  
5 embodiment, “001” is used as the first identifier for the Fine Art order category, “002” is used as  
6 the first identifier for the Decorative Art category, “003” is used as the first identifier for the  
7 Antiquities category, “004” is used as the first identifier for the Other Discrete Disciplines  
8 category, and “005” is used as the first identifier for the Collectibles category.

9 **Family Categories**

10 In one embodiment, one or more family categories (18) may then be established such that  
11 the given asset may be further classified. Once Family categories have been established, each  
12 family category is identified with a second identifier (28). It is then determined, based upon  
13 stored information concerning the given asset, what family category (18) describes the given  
14 asset. Once the applicable family category is determined, the given asset is designated as being  
15 described by the applicable family category. The second identifier (28) corresponding to the  
16 applicable family category may then be assigned to the given asset.

17 In one embodiment, the Fine Art order category includes four family categories each  
18 having a second identifier. In one embodiment, these categories include Paintings having a  
19 second identifier of “001”, Sculpture “002”, Works on Paper “003”, and Tapestries “004”. To  
20 illustrate, the identifier code of a given asset determined to have a Fine Art order category and a  
21 Tapestries family category would be designated by first and second identifiers of “001.004”.

22 In one embodiment, the Decorative Art order category includes five family categories  
23 each having a second identifier. These categories include Furniture “001”, Decorations “002”,

1 Couture “003”, Ephemera “004”, and Textiles “005”. To illustrate, the identifier code of a given  
2 asset determined to have a Decorative Art order category and a Textiles family category would  
3 be designated by “002.005”.

4 In one embodiment, the Antiquities order category includes seven family categories each  
5 having a second identifier. These categories include Ancient Near East “001”, Egyptian “002”,  
6 Etruscan, Roman “003”, Early Church “004”, Greek & Hellenistic “005”, Pre-Columbian “006”,  
7 and Pre-History “007”. To illustrate, the identifier code of a given asset determined to have an  
8 Antiquities order category and an Egyptian family category would be designated by “003.002”.

9 In one embodiment, the Other Discrete Disciplines order category includes nine family  
10 categories each having a second identifier. These categories include Arms & Armor “001”,  
11 Asian Art “002”, Books, Bindings, Manuscripts, Signatures, & Maps “003”, Carpets “004”,  
12 Clocks, Timepieces and Scientific Instruments “005”, Contemporary Forms in Media & Action  
13 “006”, Islamic Art “007”, Judaica “008”, and Tribal Art “009”. To illustrate, the identifier code  
14 of a given asset determined to have an Other Discrete Disciplines order category and an Carpets  
15 family category would be designated by “004.004”.

16 In one embodiment, the Collectibles order category includes eight family categories each  
17 having a second identifier. These categories include Animation & Comic Art “001”, Coins  
18 “002”, Geophysical & Mineral “003”, Sports Memorabilia “004”, Stamps”005”, Toys “006”, and  
19 Vintage Cars “007”, and Wines “008”. To illustrate, the identifier code of a given asset  
20 determined to have a Collectibles order category and a Wines family category would be  
21 designated by “005.008”.

1      **Genus Categories**

2      In one embodiment, one or more genus categories (20) may then be established such that  
3      the given asset may be further classified. Once genus categories have been established, each  
4      genus category is identified with a third identifier (30). It is then determined, based upon the  
5      stored information concerning the given asset, what genus category (20) describes the given  
6      asset. Once the applicable genus category is determined, the given asset is designated as being  
7      described by the applicable genus category. The third identifier (30) corresponding to the  
8      applicable genus category (20), may then be assigned to the given asset.

9      Referring further to Fig. 2, in one embodiment, the Paintings family category includes  
10     twelve genus categories each having a third identifier. These categories include American  
11     through 19<sup>th</sup> century “001”, English through 19<sup>th</sup> century “002”, French through 19<sup>th</sup> century  
12     “003”, Other Continental through 19<sup>th</sup> century “004”, Contemporary “005”, Modernist 20<sup>th</sup>  
13     century Masterworks “006”, Illuminations & Incunabula “007”, Latin America “008”, Mannerist  
14     “009”, Medieval “010”, Old Master “011”, and Renaissance “012”. To illustrate, the identifier  
15     code of a given asset determined to have a Fine Art order category, a Paintings family category,  
16     and a Mannerist genus category would be designated by “001.001.009”.

17     In one embodiment, the Sculpture family category includes nine genus categories each  
18     having a third identifier. These categories include American through 19<sup>th</sup> century “001”, English  
19     through 19<sup>th</sup> century “002”, French through 19<sup>th</sup> century “003”, Other Continental through 19<sup>th</sup>  
20     century “004”, Contemporary “005”, Modernist 20<sup>th</sup> century Masterworks “006”, Late Roman,  
21     Gothic & Medieval “007”, Renaissance “008”, and Garden Sculpture “009”. To illustrate, the  
22     identifier code of a given asset determined to have a Fine Art order category, a Sculpture family  
23     category, and a Garden Sculpture genus category would be designated by “001.002.009”.

1        In one embodiment, the Works on Paper family category includes six genus categories  
2    each having a third identifier. These categories include Drawings “001”, Watercolors “002”,  
3    Photographs “003”, The other print media “004”, Contemporary “005”, and Modernist 20<sup>th</sup>  
4    century Masterworks “006”. To illustrate, the identifier code of a given asset determined to have  
5    a Fine Art order category, a Works on Paper family category, and a photographs genus category  
6    would be designated by first, second, and third identifiers of “001.003.003”.

7        In one embodiment, the Furniture family category within the Decorative Art order  
8    category includes five genus categories each having a third identifier. These categories include  
9    American through 19<sup>th</sup> century “001”, English through 19<sup>th</sup> century “002”, French through 19<sup>th</sup>  
10   century “003”, Other Continental through 19<sup>th</sup> century “004”, and Modernist 20<sup>th</sup> century  
11   Masterworks “005”. To illustrate, the identifier code of a given asset determined to have a  
12   Decorative Art order category, a Furniture family category, and a Other Continental through 19<sup>th</sup>  
13   century genus category would be designated by “002.001.004”.

14       In one embodiment, the Decorations family category within the Decorative Art order  
15   category includes five genus categories each having a third identifier. These categories include  
16   American through 19<sup>th</sup> century “001”, English through 19<sup>th</sup> century “002”, French through 19<sup>th</sup>  
17   century “003”, Other Continental through 19<sup>th</sup> century “004”, and Modernist 20<sup>th</sup> century  
18   Masterworks “005”. To illustrate, the identifier code of a given asset determined to have a  
19   Decorative Art order category, a Decorations family category, and an Other Continental through  
20   19<sup>th</sup> century genus category would be designated by “002.002.004”.

21       In one embodiment, the Couture family category within the Decorative Art order  
22   category includes three genus categories each having a third identifier. These categories include

1 Costumes “001”, Accessories “002”, and Jewelry: Precious and Other “003”. To illustrate, the  
2 identifier code of a given asset determined to have a Decorative Art order category, a Couture  
3 family category, and a Costumes genus category would be designated by “002.003.001”.

4 In one embodiment, the Ancient Near East, Egyptian, Etruscan / Roman, Early Church  
5 or Greek & Hellenistic family categories within the Antiquities order category include three  
6 genus categories each having a third identifier. These categories include Fine Art “001”,  
7 Coinage “002”, and Articles of Daily Life “003”. To illustrate, the identifier code of a given  
8 asset determined to have an Antiquities order category, an Egyptian family category, and a Fine  
9 Art genus category would be designated by “003.002.001”.

10 In one embodiment, the Pre-Columbian family category within the Antiquities order  
11 category include two genus categories each having a third identifier. These categories include  
12 Fine Art “001” and Articles of Daily Life “002”. To illustrate, the identifier code of a given  
13 asset determined to have an Antiquities order category, a Pre-Columbian family category, and a  
14 Fine Art genus category would be designated by “003.006.001”.

15 In one embodiment, the Asian Art family category within the Other Discrete Disciplines  
16 order category includes five genus categories each having a third identifier. These categories  
17 include Chinese “001”, Japanese “002”, Korean “003”, Indian “004”, and Central & Southeast  
18 Asian “005”. To illustrate, the identifier code of a given asset determined to have a Decorative  
19 Art order category, a Couture family category, and a Costumes genus category would be  
20 designated by “002.003.001”.

21 In one embodiment, the Tribal Art family category within the Other Discrete Disciplines  
22 order category includes three genus categories each having a third identifier. These categories

1 include American Indian Art “001”, African Art “002”, and Oceanic Art “003”. To illustrate, the  
2 identifier code of a given asset determined to have an Other Discrete Disciplines order category,  
3 a Tribal Art family category, and a African Art genus category would be designated by  
4 “004.008.002”.

5 **Species Categories**

6 In one embodiment, one or more species categories (22) may then be established such  
7 that the given asset may be further classified. Once species categories (22) have been established,  
8 each species category is identified with a fourth identifier (32). It is then determined, based upon  
9 the stored information concerning the given asset, what species category (22) describes the given  
10 asset. Once the applicable species category is determined, the given asset is designated as being  
11 described by the applicable species category. The fourth identifier (32) corresponding to the  
12 applicable species category (22) may then be assigned to the given asset.

13 In one embodiment, the American through 19<sup>th</sup> century genus category having a Paintings  
14 family category includes three species categories each having a fourth identifier. These  
15 categories include American School “001”, Itinerant Painters “002”, and Impressionists “003”.  
16 To illustrate, the identifier code of a given asset determined to have a Fine Art order category, a  
17 Paintings family category, an American through 19<sup>th</sup> century genus category, and an American  
18 School species category would be designated by “001.001.001.001”.

19 In one embodiment, the English through 19<sup>th</sup> century genus category having a Paintings  
20 family category includes one species category having a fourth identifier. This category includes  
21 Victorian “001”. To illustrate, the identifier code of a given asset determined to have a Fine Art  
22 order category, a Paintings family category, an English through 19<sup>th</sup> century genus category, and  
23 a Victorian species category would be designated by “001.001.002.001”.

1           In one embodiment, the French through 19<sup>th</sup> century genus category having a Paintings  
2 family category includes two species categories each having a fourth identifier. These categories  
3 include Barbizon School “001” and Impressionists “002”. To illustrate, the identifier code of a  
4 given asset determined to have a Fine Art order category, a Paintings family category, a French  
5 through 19<sup>th</sup> century genus category, and an Impressionists species category would be designated  
6 by “001.001.003.002”.

7           In one embodiment, the Modernist 20<sup>th</sup> century Masterworks genus category having a  
8 Paintings family category includes one species category having a fourth identifier. This category  
9 includes American “001”. To illustrate, the identifier code of a given asset determined to have a  
10 Fine Art order category, a Paintings family category, a Modernist 20<sup>th</sup> century Masterworks  
genus category, and an American species category would be designated by “001.001.006.001”.

11           In one embodiment, the French through 19<sup>th</sup> century genus category having a Sculpture  
12 family category includes one species category having a fourth identifier. This category includes  
13 19<sup>th</sup> century “001”. To illustrate, the identifier code of a given asset determined to have a Fine  
14 Art order category, a Sculpture family category, a French through 19<sup>th</sup> century genus category,  
15 and a 19<sup>th</sup> century species category would be designated by “001.002.003.001”.

16           In one embodiment, the Drawings genus category having a Works on Paper family  
17 category includes two species categories each having a fourth identifier. These categories  
18 include Old Master “001” and Other “002”. To illustrate, the identifier code of a given asset  
19 determined to have a Fine Art order category, a Works on Paper family category, Drawings  
20 genus category, and an Old Master species category would be designated by “001.003.001.001”.

1        In one embodiment, the American through 19<sup>th</sup> century, English through 19<sup>th</sup> century, and  
2        French through 19<sup>th</sup> century genus categories located within the Furniture family category each  
3        include one species category having a fourth identifier. This category includes Seat & Case  
4        “001”. To illustrate, the identifier code of a given asset determined to have a Decorative Art  
5        order category, a Furniture family category, an American through 19<sup>th</sup> century genus category,  
6        and a Seat & Case species category would be designated by “002.001.001.001”.

7        In one embodiment, the American through 19<sup>th</sup> century, English through 19<sup>th</sup> century,  
8        French through 19<sup>th</sup> century, and Other Continental through 19<sup>th</sup> century genus categories located  
9        within the Decorations family category each include five species categories each having a fourth  
10      identifier. These categories include Ceramic “001”, Metalwork: Precious & Other “002”,  
11      Stonework “003”, Glass “004” and Wood “005”. To illustrate, the identifier code of a given  
12      asset determined to have a Decorative Art order category, a Decorations family category, an  
13      American through 19<sup>th</sup> century genus category, and a Wood species category would be  
14      designated by “002.002.001.005”.

#### **Sub-Species Categories**

15      In one embodiment, one or more sub-species categories (24) may then be established  
16      such that the given asset may be further classified. Once sub-species categories have been  
17      established, each sub-species category is identified with a fifth identifier (34). It is then  
18      determined, based upon the stored information concerning the given asset, what sub-species  
19      category (24) describes the given asset. Once the applicable sub-species category is determined,  
20      the given asset is designated as being described by the applicable sub-species category (24). The  
21      fifth identifier (34) corresponding to the applicable sub-species category may then be assigned to  
22      the given asset.

1        In one embodiment, the American School species category includes two sub-species  
2        categories each having a fifth identifier. These categories include 1850 through 1900, designated  
3        by "001" and Hudson River School "002". To illustrate, the identifier code of a given asset  
4        determined to have a Fine Art order category, a Paintings family category, an American through  
5        19<sup>th</sup> Century genus category, an American School species category and a Hudson River School  
6        sub-species category would be designated by "001.001.001.001.002".

7        In one embodiment, the 19<sup>th</sup> century species category includes two sub-species categories  
8        each having a fifth identifier. These categories include Metalwork "001" and Stonework "002".  
9        To illustrate, the identifier code of a given asset determined to have a Fine Art order category, a  
10      Sculpture family category, an French through 19<sup>th</sup> century genus category, a 19<sup>th</sup> century species  
11      category and a Metalwork sub-species category would be designated by "001.002.003.001.001".

12      In one embodiment, the Seat & Case species category located within either the American  
13      through 19<sup>th</sup> century, English through 19<sup>th</sup> century, or French through 19<sup>th</sup> century genus  
14      categories each include one sub-species category having a fifth identifier. This category includes  
15      1750 through 1800, designated by "001" and Hudson River School "002". To illustrate, the  
16      identifier code of a given asset determined to have a Decorative Art order category, a Furniture  
17      family category, an American through 19<sup>th</sup> century genus category, a Seat & Case species  
18      category and a 1750 through 1800 sub-species category would be designated by  
19      "002.001.001.001.001".

20      In one embodiment, the identifier code assigned to a given asset may be compiled by a  
21      database for storage, and/or used to conduct comparisons between the given asset and other  
22      assets having the same identifier codes. This is done using valuation information that may be

1 stored in the database. The valuation information may be cross referenced with the identifier  
2 code to determine the fair market value of the given asset. Asset information may be transmitted  
3 through local or wide area networks or the internet so that information may be readily available  
4 anywhere.

5 In another embodiment, the present invention allows for the classification of tangible  
6 assets by following a few simple steps. First, a classification hierarchy (100) having a plurality  
7 of categories is provided. Second, at least one given asset is classified by generating output that  
8 indicates an applicable order category (16) for the given asset.

9 The given asset may be further classified by generating output that indicates the  
10 applicable family (18), genus, (20), species (22), and sub-species category (24) for the given  
11 asset. Each applicable order, family, genus, species, and sub-species category (16, 18, 20, 22  
12 and 24, respectively) may then be assigned first, second, third, fourth, and fifth identifiers (26,  
13 28, 30, 32 and 34, respectively). These assigned identifiers may be combined to form an  
14 identifier code which may be used to identify and compare assets of the same classifications.

15 The present invention provides even greater accuracy to the classification process by  
16 providing an additional one hundred separate and distinct classifications that may be combined  
17 with the identifier code. Specifically, the present invention provides a scale of 1 to 100 on the  
18 left hand side of the classification code, as illustrated in Figure 2. This additional identifier may  
19 be combined with the first, second, third, fourth and fifth identifiers (26, 28, 30, 32 and 34,  
20 respectively) of the identifier code to provide further classification of the given asset. In one  
21 embodiment, the identifier code of a given asset determined to have a Fine Art order category

1 (16), a Sculpture family category (18), and a Garden Sculpture genus category (20) would be  
2 designated by "001.13.002.009", "13" being the additional identifier in the identifier code.

3       Although the invention has been described with reference to a specific embodiment, this  
4 description is not meant to be construed in a limiting sense. On the contrary, various  
5 modifications of the disclosed embodiments will become apparent to those skilled in the art upon  
6 reference to the description of the invention. It is therefore contemplated that the appended  
7 claims will cover such modifications, alternatives, and equivalents that fall within the true spirit  
8 and scope of the invention.

9